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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

THREE SONNETS

OLD WIVES' TALE

I saw my grandmother's shadow on the wall
In firelight; it danced with queer grimaces
As if her serious soul were making faces
At me or life or God or at us all.
And I, an urchin lying at her feet,
Then caught my first glimpse of the secret powers
That stir beneath this universe of ours,
Making a witches' carnival when they meet.
Across the firelit dusk my sensitive mood
Dreamed out to mingle with the waifs of Time
Whose unsolved stories haunt the poets' rhyme
And in dark streets of ancient cities brood—
Like sudden ghosts rising above the grime
With beauty and with terror that chills the blood.

HOLY WRIT

It does not seem so many years ago—
Those nights when I lay shivering in my bed
And saw the candle-light round my aunt's head
Casting its hazy sanctifying glow;
And heard her read strange story after story
Of Jonah, Adam, Moses, Esau, Ruth,

Arthur Davison Ficke

Of Solomon's old age and David's youth—
Things haunting, tender, terrible or gory.
Still can I see the Queen of Sheba's hair;
And all real lions are but mockery
To him who once knew Daniel's; there's no tree
That can with Eve's great Paradise Tree compare:
A golden light gleamed through that ancient air
That leaves me homesick in modernity.

THE BOOK OF LU T'ANG CHU

In the reign of the great Emperor Lu T'ang Chu
Wise men were ordered to inscribe in a book
All the great body of wisdom that men knew.
Today I turn the pages, and as I look
I cannot see anything very new or old,
And I wonder why it was worth the trouble, then,
Of days and nights and a thousand labors untold
Which the volume must have exacted from those wise men.
But still we write—and the Emperor now is blown
As grey dust over the limitless Asian plains.
Still we inscribe all that is humanly known,
Although no ruler honors us for our pains—
Recording a thousand wisdoms, all our own,
To celebrate our good and glorious reigns.

Arthur Davison Ficke